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TOR: 052016Z JUN 90

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SUBJECT: 16 MAY 1990 MEETING

2. [REDACTED] DISCUSS, AMONG OTHER TOPICS, THE STATUS OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE KILLING OF THE JESUITS. [REDACTED] BEGAN BY DISCUSSING THE IMPACT THE CASE HAS HAD ON RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S.G. AND THE GOES, AND THE IMPACT IT MAY HAVE ON U.S. AID TO EL SALVADOR. [REDACTED] THE FEELING AMONG MOST OF THE OFFICER CORPS IS THAT AID WILL BE CUT TO SOME DEGREE REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME OF THE CASE, GIVEN THE EVENTS IN NICARAGUA AND EASTERN EUROPE.

3. [REDACTED] SAID HE HAD ATTENDED THE MEETING HELD AT THE GENERAL STAFF THE NIGHT BEFORE THE JESUITS WERE KILLED. HE SAID THE MEMBERS OF THE HIGH COMMAND WERE VERY NERVOUS ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE OFFENSIVE, WHILE THOSE COMMANDERS WHO WERE DOING THE FIGHTING BELIEVED THEY WOULD WIN. [REDACTED] SAID THAT AT THAT MEETING THE DECISION WAS MADE TO COUNTERATTACK INTO THE AREAS HELD BY THE INSURGENTS, AS THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO DRIVE THEM OUT. IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT THERE WOULD BE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. HOWEVER, [REDACTED] STRESSED THAT AT NO POINT, WHILE HE WAS PRESENT, DID ANYONE SUGGEST KILLING THE JESUITS, OR TAKING ANY STEPS BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF LEGALITY. THE SUBJECT OF A TRUCE CAME UP, AND ALL PRESENT AGREED THAT THE INSURGENTS HAD STARTED THE OFFENSIVE AND THE ARMED FORCES WOULD FIGHT UNTIL IT WAS OVER, AND WOULD NOT ACCEPT A TRUCE. [REDACTED] ALSO SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK HIS INFANTRY UNIT COULD TAKE ITS OBJECTIVE WITHOUT SUPPORT, SO HE REQUESTED AND RECEIVED ARMORED UNITS TO SUPPORT HIM.

4. AT THE END OF THE MEETING [REDACTED] COLONEL DIONISIO ((MACHUCA)) LED THE GROUP IN PRAYER, AND ASKED FOR GOD'S PROTECTION OF THE CIVILIANS CAUGHT UP IN THE FIGHTING. [REDACTED] SAID THAT WHEN HE RETURNED TO HIS COMMAND POST TO BRIEF HIS OFFICERS ON THEIR MISSIONS, HE ALSO STRESSED THE NEED TO AVOID UNNECESSARY CIVILIAN CASUALTIES.

5. [REDACTED] SAID THAT THE FOLLOWING MORNING HE HEARD OVER THE ARMED FORCES TACTICAL RADIO NET THAT THE JESUITS HAD BEEN KILLED. HE BELIEVED AT FIRST THAT THE FMLN HAD COMMITTED THE KILLINGS, BECAUSE THE DEATHS WOULD NOT AID THE GOES IN ANY WAY. IN ADDITION, HE SAID THAT WHEN THE NEWS OF THE KILLINGS WAS BROADCAST LATER OVER THE COMMERCIAL RADIO, HE WAS TOLD BY HIS OFFICERS IN THE FRONT

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[REDACTED]

LINES THAT THE INSURGENTS OPPOSITE THEM BEGAN CHEERING AND CLAPPING, WHICH REINFORCED HIS BELIEF THAT THE FMLN WAS RESPONSIBLE.

6. [REDACTED] SAID THE FEELING AMONG THE OFFICERS HE HAS SPOKEN WITH IS THAT THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE JESUIT KILLINGS SHOULD CONTINUE AND THOSE FOUND GUILTY SHOULD BE PUNISHED. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THE SALVADORAN LEGAL SYSTEM IS SLOW AND CUMBERSOME, AND TO TRY TO RUSH THE PROCESS MAY LEAD TO ERRORS, SUCH AS AN INCOMPLETE INVESTIGATION OF ALL PERSONS INVOLVED. HE SAID THE U.S.G. SHOULD UNDERSTAND THIS AND NOT TRY TO PRESSURE THE GOES INTO REACHING A HURRIED, AND POSSIBLY FLAWED, CONCLUSION. HE SAID HIS PERSONAL OPINION, BASED ON HIS PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF COLONEL RENE EMILIO ((PONCE)), IS THAT PONCE DID NOT RPT NOT ORDER THE KILLINGS. HE IS LESS CERTAIN ABOUT COLONEL JUAN ORLANDO ((ZEPEDA)).

7. ON A SEPARATE TOPIC, [REDACTED] SAID HE LEARNED THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE "TANDONA" HELD A PARTY AT A HOTEL IN SAN SALVADOR TO CELEBRATE THE SALVADORAN "DAY OF THE SOLDIER," AND THE PARTY EVENTUALLY MOVED TO PONCE'S HOUSE. DURING THE PARTY, MEMBERS OF THE TANDONA SAID THAT PONCE MUST BECOME MINISTER OF DEFENSE (MOD) IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TANDONA. [REDACTED] FINDS THIS DISTRESSING, SINCE HE HAD HOPED PONCE'S PROMOTION TO MOD WOULD ALLOW PONCE TO REMOVE FROM COMMAND POSITIONS THOSE MEMBERS OF THE TANDONA WHO ARE CORRUPT, INCOMPETENT, OR BOTH. HE IS CONCERNED THAT THIS MEETING, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT WAS HELD AT PONCE'S HOUSE, INDICATES THAT PONCE WILL NOT "CLEAN HOUSE," WHICH COULD LEAD TO DISCONTENT AMONG LOWER RANKING OFFICERS. [REDACTED] SAID REMOVING TANDONA MEMBERS WILL IMPROVE THE IMAGE AND CAPABILITY OF THE ARMED FORCES INSTITUTION, AS WELL AS OPEN UP PROMOTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER OFFICERS, SO TANDONA MEMBERS FACING REMOVAL SHOULD NOT COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF JUNIOR OFFICERS.

8. RETURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF CUTS IN AID, [REDACTED] SAID MANY OFFICERS BELIEVE THAT IF AID IS CUT THE US MILITARY ADVISORS SHOULD BE REMOVED, SINCE THEIR EXPENSES ARE DEDUCTED FROM THE AID MONEY.

9. [REDACTED] ALSO COMMENTED ON THE SERIES OF MEETINGS PONCE AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF COLONEL GUILLERMO ((RUBIO)) HAVE HAD WITH JUNIOR OFFICERS. [REDACTED] SAID THE MEETING ON MONDAY, 14 MAY WAS DISTURBING TO PONCE AND RUBIO BECAUSE THE OFFICES DID NOT SEEM INTERESTED IN PONCE'S TALK, AND ASKED VERY FEW QUESTIONS. ON TUESDAY 15 MAY MINISTER OF DEFENSE GENERAL HUMBERTO ((LARIOS)) SPOKE FOR ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF, AND THOSE PRESENT THOUGHT HIS REMARKS SOUNDED LIKE A FAREWELL SPEECH. [REDACTED] TOOK THIS, COUPLED WITH THE TANDONA PARTY AT PONCE'S HOUSE, TO MEAN THAT LARIOS WOULD SOON BE REPLACED BY PONCE.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]